

THE  
BOSTON MEDICAL AND SURGICAL  
JOURNAL.

VOL. XVI.]

WEDNESDAY, JULY 5, 1837.

[NO. 22.]

REPORT OF THE NEW HAVEN COUNTY MEDICAL SOCIETY.

[THE General Assembly of the State of Connecticut, at their session in May, 1836, received petitions from various parts of the State, praying for a repeal of the 8th section of the "act to incorporate the Connecticut Medical Society." By a vote of the General Assembly, these petitions were postponed to the next session of the Assembly, with an order for a citation to the Medical Society. In consequence of this citation, the Medical Society of New Haven County, at their annual meeting in April, 1837, adopted the following Report, as expressive of their views in regard to the expediency of the proposed measure.]

The Medical Laws in this State were enacted for a two-fold purpose. First, that our State might be furnished with an able and faithful medical faculty; and secondly, that the public might, as far as possible, be secured from medical imposture and the evils which flow from it. In pursuing these objects, the public good, rather than the benefit of a profession, was the end and aim. With the design of promoting these views, the following act has been admitted to a place in our statute-book. It is part of an act entitled "An Act in relation to the Medical Institution of Yale College."

"Every medical student shall be required to attend to the study of physic and surgery, for two years, with some medical or surgical professor or practitioner, who is in respectable standing, *Provided*, he shall have been graduated at some college; otherwise to study three years; to have acquired in addition to a good English education, a competent knowledge of the Latin language, and of the principles of Natural Philosophy; to have arrived at the age of twenty-one years; to be of a good moral character; and to deliver to the committee of examination a satisfactory dissertation upon some subject in medicine or surgery, or the auxiliary branches. And every medical student shall attend one course of the lectures under the professors of the Medical Institution of Yale College, or of some other public medical institution, previously to his being admitted to an examination for a license."

In furtherance of these same views, the following provision, contained in an act entitled an "An Act to incorporate the Connecticut Medical Society," has been made. "No physician or surgeon, who shall have commenced practice since the year one thousand eight hundred, or who shall hereafter commence practice, shall be entitled by law to recover any debt or fees for such practice, unless he shall have been duly

licensed by some medical society, or college of physicians, and all persons licensed to practise physic and surgery, and practising within this State, shall of course be members of the Medical Society."

That portion of an act last quoted is the "8th section," which it is proposed to repeal. It will be observed that it has (and was designed to have) the force and effect of a penalty for not complying with the conditions contained in that other act which, in these pages, precedes it. Without it, the law which makes a course of study necessary to the practitioner of physic is, of course, inoperative *as a law*; for a law which may be violated with impunity, is a law without a penalty, or, more properly, no law at all.

It surely will be conceded that the public have a real interest in the character and qualifications of medical men—the acknowledged guardians of life and health. Their near relation to the very sources of happiness and well-being has induced the civilized governments of every age and country to make regulations and adopt measures calculated to render them the more worthy the high trust confided to them.

That a successful practitioner of physic must be well acquainted with the principles of his art; that these principles are not to be learned in a day; and that the prescribed course of medical study in this State is not unnecessarily long, are truths which, in other circumstances, we might feel ashamed to argue. These truths we should ordinarily deem it necessary but to state; but the attempts which are now making to conceal or forget them, render it necessary, or at least, *proper*, that we cite *proof*.

There is not, within the range of our knowledge, a more complicated piece of mechanism than the human system. Taken in the number of its parts, and the variety and intricacy of its laws, it is without an equal. A perfect knowledge of its construction and composition as a *simple machine* is the work of years; and this knowledge does not require a tithe of the study necessary to comprehend it fully as a *living system*. It is upon this system that the physician is obliged to operate. It is his business to understand its powers, to perceive the nature and seat of its disorders, and on proper occasions, to speed, to check, to modify, or in some way to correct its movements. Surely, then, two or three years is a period short enough in which to lay in a competent store of the knowledge in question. It is agreed that he who would put in order even the simplest mechanical contrivance, must inform himself regarding its construction. An old wooden clock that needs repair is not put into the hands of a man who never saw the interior of a clock; or if placed in such hands, the owner expects it will be spoiled. He who would *prescribe* successfully for a disordered time-keeper, must acquaint himself with the number and relation of its parts, and the mechanical forces which originate and regulate its motion; or, in other words, he must study its *anatomy* and *physiology*. And is a man fitted for the office of superintending, regulating, and repairing the human machine—of prescribing correctly for its multiplied disorders, who knows nothing of its parts, powers and operations—nothing of its anatomy and physiology? and would it not be well to require of him who takes upon himself this

office, at least, that amount of knowledge regarding his business which we are accustomed to demand of our ordinary mechanics? Undoubtedly, it is as difficult and intricate a piece of work to patch up a broken constitution as a leaky pair of boots—to keep a-going a rickety human system as a rickety time-piece; while the consequences of blundering and bungling workmanship are even more momentous.

But a knowledge of anatomy and physiology merely, is not all that is required of the physician. Besides being acquainted with disease in all its various and ever varying forms, he must know the means best adapted to cure it. Disease is to be removed by the application of certain agents or instruments which have power to modify the functions, to rouse or diminish vital energy, to correct disordered movements, and to restore the lost balance of the system. These agents are to the physician what tools are to the mechanic. They have multiplied powers, and multiplied and varying relations to our organs, which it is no easy matter to learn. To understand their nature fully, the purposes to which they may be applied, and the effects which they are calculated to produce, in all the different forms of disease, and under the different circumstances of constitution, age, sex, season, climate, &c., is a task sufficient for the acutest mind and the most persevering industry.

It cannot with reason be disputed, then, that medicine, in order to be understood, must be *studied*. Medical skill can be the result of nothing else than severe and protracted application. It is not a thing that men are born with, or purchase of strolling Indians and seventh sons, or learn by dreaming, or even discover by meditation, any more than shoe-making or ship-making. There is neither magic or witchcraft about it. It cannot be acquired without some expense both of time and money, and without, at least, a common share of understanding. The lazy and the lounging, as well as the weak and the ignorant, can never possess it. That which comes without industry is pretension, and makes up in bustling and boasting what it lacks of something better.

But perhaps what we have said on this point is better than more. Those who look upon study and application as, of course, indispensable to true medical skill, will perhaps regard what has been offered as mere trifling, and unworthy even the little space which has been allotted it; while such as consider our art as nothing better than a sort of *knack* which certain men and women get by inheritance, or as a kind of juggling akin to fire-eating and best exercised by mountebanks and vagabonds, will hardly be convinced by anything in the shape of *argument*.

But though it be admitted that medicine is based on science, is a comprehensive and difficult study, and has a most important bearing on the interests of the community, it may still be said that there are not sufficient reasons for legislative provisions and restrictions regarding its practice. To justify legislation in this matter, it will be necessary to show that the highest general good, or in other words the interest and safety of the public, requires it. This we are prepared to do.

The ease with which imposition in the healing art is practised, affords

one powerful reason why legislators should attempt something for the public security. In consequence of the peculiar opportunities and facilities for imposture in our profession, the practice of it holds out great temptations to the idle, the artful, the unprincipled, and the thousands who hate any honest vocation. Hence comes charlatanism in all its extent and variety, from Mr. Swaim and the great nostrum-monger in New York, down to the obscurest root-doctor who strolls about from village to village. We had the curiosity lately to inquire into the proportion of the advertising columns of the several daily newspapers of the city of New York, which was taken up with the advertisements of quack medicines. We found this proportion to be, in the penny papers, at least one half, and in the larger papers, somewhat less than that.

The reason that imposition is so easy and successful in medicine, is to be found in the general want of information regarding the nature of disease, the operation of remedies, and the powers of the human system. As a consequence, the skill and knowledge of a physician must, for the most part, be taken upon trust, except so far as evidence is to be obtained from his general character and acquirements. There is no subject which, by the mass of mankind, is so rarely made a matter of general study and investigation, even in its elements, as medical science; while, at the same time, there is no subject regarding which men so universally consider themselves adequately informed, in all its practical applications, as this same medical science. This want of knowledge, unfortunately not felt as a *want*, we deplore, because worth in our profession is, as a consequence, imperfectly appreciated, and because ignorance and impudence thereby gain an advantage of the utmost importance. It is well known, that the arts of intrigue, and the no less potent art of puffing, will oftentimes procure occupation and a name, when unpretending merit is left to perish unnoticed. This fact is well illustrated by the sudden and full employment frequently obtained by itinerants and adventurers without character or merit, and of whose vaunted skill and cures we know nothing, except what is to be found in a pompous advertisement or handbill.

The intense anxiety and apprehension of the sick and their friends, and the eagerness with which they grasp at the promise of relief, from however questionable a source it may come, give the arts of empiricism a ten fold efficiency, and villainy an advantage it would not otherwise possess. The powerful manner in which the fear of death operates upon the discerning and judging faculty, particularly when the mind is enfeebled by sickness, can never be fully understood by those who have not often witnessed its effect. Under these circumstances, the understanding is, as it were, gone, and man is the creature of impulse and feeling. He is wavering, credulous, and superstitious. He is perhaps ready to bestow confidence on the most worthless objects; to repose faith in the most trifling, ridiculous and hazardous means, *provided* his humor and hopes are encouraged. We have often witnessed, with the most painful emotions, the effects, immediate and remote, of extravagant and unwarrantable promises in such cases.

The belief which still prevails to no inconsiderable extent, and which

is the inheritance of a darker age—the belief that medicine is an *occult* science; that medical skill comes in some unknown or undefinable way—that it runs in the blood, or is a gift of nature or heaven—that it is a possession rather than an acquisition—has exerted a most powerful influence on the progress of quackery. We know that this belief will not often be acknowledged, but it is real and influential notwithstanding, as proved by the conduct and practice of men. It cannot be expected, of course, that those who suppose disease to be cured by the exercise of a magical influence, or by tricks of legerdemain, will have a very large share of that salutary incredulity in reference to extravagant pretension and secret skill, which is the safety of the sick man. And when men cannot protect themselves, whether by means of ignorance, or prejudice, or passion, or superstition, or even obstinacy, it is the duty of government to become their protector.

We do not mean to say that quackery *never* effects cures. We know that it is sometimes successful; but we also know that those who practise it deserve little credit for such success. There is an influence exerted on the mind by the imposing process of a mountebank, particularly in the case of nervous and susceptible persons or those given to superstition—an influence of which both patient and prescriber are probably ignorant—which is all-powerful in curing certain kinds of disease. Hope, expectation, confidence, or even the more violent emotions, such as anger, terror, astonishment, have cured many a case of sickness, when recovery has been attributed to some worthless medicine, or to the magical skill of a juggler. Besides, empirics sometimes employ powerful remedies, of real value in their place, which, being prescribed for every form of disease, must infallibly produce relief in some, according to the laws of mere chance. It is well known that arsenic and corrosive sublimate are frequent ingredients in the “vegetable” compounds and specifics of quacks. The real cures effected by empirics, or by medicines used in an empirical manner, suggest the case of a militia-man, who, “being armed and equipped as the law directs,” is endeavoring, blindfold, to drive a bullet through some certain object within reach of a musket shot, but in an unknown direction. He blazes away most valorously, and at every point of the compass; and after having riddled and shivered almost everything about him, he of necessity finally hits his mark, according to the laws of chance. But does this fact prove him a marksman? Or is it best, from such an instance of blundering success, to blazon his name abroad as one prodigiously skilled in shooting? And yet, such a course is much like that which is often taken with regard to the random successes of empirics, or those ignorant of the nature and situation of disease, &c. And the declaration of a man who always shoots with his eyes shut, that he never misses his mark, and never yet killed the wrong game, is worth just as much as the common boast of the charlatan that he never fails to cure, that his means are perfectly safe, and that he has in no instance lost a patient.

The want of a test, then, of easy application, by which medical qualifications can be determined by the public, the secrecy and decep-

tion with regard to the means employed, which are in the prescriber's power, the generally unknown nature of the remedies he uses, even though their names be known, the debilitating effects of disease and anxiety on the mind of the sick man, and, consequently, the great temptations and opportunities afforded to unprincipled and unqualified men to enter upon the business of medical imposture; all these things, and the evils which flow from them, furnish so many reasons why the appointed guardians of the public safety should inquire into the qualifications of medical men, and attach some specific penalty to the practice of fraud and deception. That a government has a right, and, in fact, is *obligated* to do this, cannot be questioned; indeed, it is for this very purpose, and others like it, that a government exists.

The principle for which we would here contend is simply this—*That it is the right and duty of government to protect the people in every possible way against any trade, or craft, or profession, in which the public has peculiar interest, and the temptations to defraud and deceive are great.* This principle is recognized on almost every page of our statute-book. In accordance with it, millers are forbidden to take but a certain amount of toll. No person can sell certain kinds of goods at auction without a license. "No person shall set up or carry on the trade or mystery of tanning leather, except he prove his skill therein," "and obtain a license therefor," under a penalty of sixty-seven dollars.\* Why? Because the tanning of leather requires skill, and because leather is an article in which extensive fraud is practicable. No man can ship beef, fish, flour, onions, hay, shingles, &c., to a foreign market, unless they have been inspected and approved. Beef for exportation must be, at least, two years old, cut and cured in a certain manner, &c. These inconveniences (restrictions on personal rights, if you please), must be submitted to, to prevent imposition, and to secure a good character and market abroad.

In accordance with this same principle, it has been further enacted that "no person shall keep a district school, until he has been examined and approved by the visitors of the school society," and shall receive a certificate of his qualifications for a teacher. Why? Because the business of school-teaching requires some knowledge, and because evils would be the consequence of committing it to incompetent men. Neither shall any person practise as an attorney, unless he be approved, admitted and sworn "agreeably to the rules established" by the court, unless it be in his own case; "nor shall more than one attorney be allowed to plead on the same side of any cause," with certain exceptions; "and in no case, shall more than two attorneys be admitted to plead, on the same side." All these embarrassments the friends of "free trade" and "equal rights" must submit to, because the public good (always a higher object than individual good), requires some such measures to prevent the evils of protracted litigation, and the imposition of unqualified and designing men.

The whole license system recognizes and exemplifies the principle

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\* Revised Statutes.



under consideration—that the free exercise of certain vocations by all, without restraint or condition, is not consistent with the highest general good. Inn-keepers are required to obtain a license, give a bond for the observance of the laws, conform to certain regulations regarding the selling of liquors and the preservation of morals, &c.

All these restraints on the business of society and of individuals—restraints similar to those enacted by every civilized government on earth—sufficiently prove the truth and justice of the principles we have been considering; or, at least, show that it is recognized and acted upon continually in our statute-book, which fact is all that is required for our present purpose. Therefore, in order to show the propriety of legislative interference in regard to the practice of physic, it only remains for us to prove that the medical art is *similar* in its nature, and in its relations to society, to other arts and occupations which, it is agreed, are proper subjects of legislation—a thing which, in fact, has already been done. If we mistake not, we have shown that the medical art, in its relation to the public welfare, holds a very high rank in importance, certainly as high as the art of the school-master or tanner. We have shown, too, that medicine is a difficult and comprehensive study, requiring natural talent, and a long period of diligent training, in such as would practise it successfully, and is not surpassed in these respects by any art or profession whatever, whether it be pleading, or tanning, or school-keeping. Furthermore, we have shown that the business of a physician offers very great advantages for imposition to artful, incompetent and irresponsible men, certainly as great as the advantages of the attorney, the pedagogue, the auctioneer, the taverner, or the tanner. Are we not right, then, when we contend that the present medical laws ought not to be repealed, that ignorant and unqualified men ought not to practise physic, and that the guards and barriers which the public now have against imposture ought not to be removed?

[To be continued.]

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#### EMBRYOTIC INFLUENCES.

BY JOHN GOULDING, M.D.

[Communicated for the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal.]

IN No. 16, of your Journal, I observed a communication from Dr. Fish, in regard to the form, color, and features of the future offspring, the purpose of which appears to be that the imagination of the female decides, to some degree, at least, what shall be the general external appearance of her progeny. An essay of this kind, in this enlightened age, I consider requires some notice. I had hoped this absurd notion had long since been exploded, or that it was confined to the weak minded and illiterate. I could not have imagined it to prejudice the mind of any man belonging to the medical profession. That the imagination can exert an influence over the mind to affect the child in utero, is as contrary to reason and to all scientific principles, as that a horse-shoe nailed over a door will secure the occupants of the house from witchery; and,

indeed, it originated from the same source. True, it is a belief that has existed from time immemorial, or, at least, is recorded by the most ancient authors. But this can be no proof of its correctness. Still it has been handed down, from one generation to another, among women, and so many facts, as they call them, have been related from one to another, that wholly to divest their minds of such notions is, among the lower classes especially, nearly or quite impossible. Their prejudices are so strongly fixed, that reason can have no influence. But minds accustomed to reason and argument cannot see such really distressing illusions proposed and supported by those who ought to found all arguments in regard to the physical condition of man, on the solid ground of anatomy and physiology, without at least expressing dissent from the doctrine, and trying to say something to show the falsity of the opinion. And to this end, I will ask Dr. F. to consider the connection between the mother and unborn child. This he will see is proved by anatomy to be indirect only, and this through the medium of the circulation. No nervous communication whatever has ever been shown to exist, not a filament of nerve passing from mother to the *fœtus* in utero. How, then, are the changes of the nervous system of the mother to affect the child? I must suppose it to go on in this wise, till it is better explained: when the mother sees a person with but one arm, the impression she receives is immediately floated along in the blood to the child, the fact communicated to the little embryo, and at once it decides that one arm only is necessary, and off one comes, if it had previously acquired any considerable size; but I cannot exactly understand by what process the arm is removed, by which particular method of amputation, how the hæmorrhage is arrested, whether it is healed by the first intention, or what is done with the parts removed; but that it is so, I have heard many a woman say. To be sure they do not describe the particular process, any more than Dr. F. does. But Dr. F. says, "facts" prove it; and I have a "fact" to relate. A child was born with one arm only; the mother says this was in consequence of her being in a house when a friend had an arm amputated. Just six days from the time of this amputation she was delivered of a son with but one arm; the other arm was missing, and the stump looked "exactly like the amputated arm when she saw it dressed." Now no reasoning nor arguments could convince her that this was not caused by her feelings when she knew of this amputation. She says she "had very singular feelings, and knew her child would have but one arm." During these peculiar feelings we must suppose the work of amputation was going on; and to do the whole work in six days, they must be expeditious surgeons in that region. Another "fact." A woman saw a calf knocked in the head; in twelve hours she was delivered of a child to all appearance sound and healthy, but it was dead, having the skull beat in as with an axe. Another: a woman who saw a fine bunch of grapes carried by the door, tried to buy them; they were sold to another person, and she *longed* very much for them; the next day her child was born with a large bunch of grapes upon the back! They must have grown very quick. A woman saw a large raisin, *longed* for it, was trying on a stocking at



the time ; her child was born with a large raisin upon the leg. It appears that whatever part is first touched after the particular thing is seen or longed for, is the part upon which the mark is placed. I saw a woman run a quarter of a mile with both arms extended at full length, so that her hands might touch no part of herself till she had washed them, after having seen a snake cross her path.

These "facts," and I might furnish ten thousand others of this character, prove to my mind quite as conclusively that the imagination of the mother during gestation has something to do with the color, form, and features of the future offspring, as any of those mentioned by Dr. F. But I will examine some of the Dr.'s facts. "When a cow or mare is to receive the male, a full view of him immediately afterwards will impress his likeness upon the future progeny ; and it is a custom among grooms to lead the horse in front of the mare, that she may look at him a minute or two." 'This, to be sure, is done, and what then ? Does it prove anything ? No arguments would convince them that this was all an illusion—an idle prejudice. But they are ignorant of philosophy, anatomy and physiology, and having been educated with such kind of ignorant prejudices, it is to be expected they will know no better. The Dr. says a relative of his had a cow which bore a white calf, and that this was because she stood by the side of a white ox. But I should think it quite as probable that the old cow got frightened at a snow bank. Capt. W.'s grey mare had a colt with a white streak in the face and nose. There is nothing wonderful, surely, in the fact that a grey mare should have a colt with a white streak upon it, though sired by a dark-bay horse ; but that Mr. B.'s brown mare had anything to do in the formation of it, is as probable as that the "specie circular" caused it. With regard to a certain acquaintance of the doctor's, whose child so much resembled a servant man of theirs, "that when she was 20 years old frequent remarks were made about it," I think it well that the husband may have been a believer in the doctrine inculcated by Dr. Fish, else jealousy might have created unpleasant disturbances in the family. If a woman were too intimate with a servant man, and especially if *enceinte* by him, it would not be unnatural for her to attempt to conceal this intimacy by saying "she perfectly hated him." This fact reminds me of a case related by Dr. Hunter, of a woman, who, after remaining childless for many years, at length had the pleasure of informing her husband that they were to be blessed with offspring. In due time she was delivered, and the child proved to be a perfect mulatto ! This was a hard blow to the husband, but the very fond wife soon satisfied him it was owing to her having been severely frightened by a big ugly negro who stood near her carriage the last time she rode out.

Dr. F. lays much stress on the fact of Laban's cattle becoming streaked, &c., in consequence of Jacob's plan of peeling the rods of poplar, hazel, and chesnut. That all this occurred as described in the bible, we have no wish or reason to doubt. But that the same effect from a like cause has continued and still continues to be produced, is what we have no reason to believe. Many commentators and learned divines explain it on entirely different principles, and without doubt the

true ones; to wit: "that there was a direct interposition of God in favor of the righteous Jacob against his selfish father-in-law, the crafty Laban; and that he was directed in the plan he adopted by a divine intimation, and rendered successful, if not by a direct miracle, yet by the Lord's giving a new and uncommon bias to the tendency of natural causes."

If the Dr. had a patient bitten by a poisonous serpent, would he erect a brazen serpent upon a pole and bid his patient look upon it and be well, with the expectation that the bite would be rendered harmless by his doing so? Such was once the fact; and why is it he would not consider the same cause and effect perpetuated in this case, as well as in regard to the peeled rods?

Perhaps it may not be fairly inferred from the Dr.'s remarks, that he believes in the power of the fancy to that extent the cases I have related imply; but certainly the principle is recognized by him.

I have already written enough on this subject, and will leave it for abler hands, hoping every friend of humanity will do all in his power to dispel this delusion of the mind from every female, for it is truly a deplorable condition. It renders the woman who really believes in such a prejudice, truly wretched during her term of gestation. Every ungratified longing, disagreeable surprise or alarm, and every fright from a disgusting object, seen or even thought of, renders her uneasy, and perhaps miserable, from the apprehension that her unborn babe shall receive a blemish, deformity, or "terrible mark." "Her nightly imaginings are those of horror, and the day affords no relief, as her mind teems with prejudices which are in favor of an influence most earnestly deprecated; and nothing but the delivery of an unblemished child can soothe her agitated feelings, or remove her long-cherished fears." The ten thousand stories told her by mischief-making gossips increase her wretchedness; and if the authority of physicians is to be super-added, her situation is such as almost to make one desire that no further addition should be made to the number of the human race.

I must be indulged, then, in a short recapitulation of the prominent arguments against so absurd a notion. These are, that there is no direct communication between the mother and child unborn, no nerves whatever, but only an indirect communication through the medium of the circulation; and all facts, as they are called, which are adduced to prove this doctrine, prove nothing or prove quite too much—for, as a general thing, it is but a short time before the birth of the child that the woman dates the longing, the fright, sight, or accident, that has caused the blemish or deformity. It gives to the imagination a power to create, and a power to destroy, as at a word. A toe, thumb, leg, or arm, the likeness of a bunch of grapes or other fruits, of insects or animals, are added to the child, and all this in a short time, sometimes in 12 hours; and again an arm, leg, &c. are taken away in the same time; for if the want of these parts or the addition of them is caused by anything seen, felt, or longed for by the female, then the unborn child must have previously been perfect—and for nature to produce such changes in so short a time as is generally allowed, is more than reason will allow us to believe. If

the limbs were once perfect, and the child is born with an arm wanting, what has become of the part removed? If it once had the usual number of fingers and toes, can it be that one in addition, upon each foot and hand, has grown in a few days or weeks? If the head was once a natural human head, what power of the imagination or of nature has changed it to that of a cat, a turtle, or snake? We know that monstrosities do occur; but they are rare, considering the great numbers daily born, and all that can be said in regard to such things is, that man is fearfully and wonderfully made; and that so very few are born with blemishes, deformities, or unsightly appearances, is owing to the wisdom of Him who numbereth the hairs of the head, and observeth even the fall of the sparrow.

*Stratford, Conn., June 5, 1837.*

#### EPIDEMIC AMONG CHILDREN.

*To the Editor of the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal.*

SIR,—I send you a brief sketch of an epidemic that has been prevailing in this village for the last two months. If you think it sufficiently interesting to merit a place in your Journal, it is at your disposal.

*Gloucester, Sandy Bay,  
June 28, 1837.*

Yours, &c.

JOSEPH REYNOLDS, M.D.

The epidemic commenced about the middle of April. There have been not far from sixty cases requiring medical attendance, besides a large number in which only domestic remedies have been employed. There have been, so far as I know, but four cases in which adults have been affected. In one of these, a robust young man, it proved fatal. With these exceptions, the disease has been confined to young children. In a large proportion of the cases, the subjects have been under two years old.

In many instances the attack was sudden and violent. In some cases, the little patients have taken their breakfast, and, as usual, gone to school; but before school was done have been compelled to return home, and by noon have been vomiting violently, or in a burning fever, complaining of great pain in the limbs, and perhaps manifesting great difficulty of breathing. Vomiting has been among the early symptoms, in very many cases. This has continued from six to twelve hours, and been followed by great heat, thirst, dyspnoea, dry, frequent cough, redness of the fauces, with painful deglutition, and in some cases by swelling and ulceration of the tonsils, with an eruption on the skin, occurring generally on the second day. Those cases in which the tonsils have been enlarged and ulcerated, so far as I have observed, have been attended uniformly by the eruption. In those cases in which there has been merely redness of the fauces, attended by painful deglutition, the eruption has not uniformly occurred, and when it has occurred, has been less perfectly developed. In this latter class of cases, the affection of the throat appeared to consist of an erythema involving the mucous membrane of the

fauces, and extending into the larynx. In the former class, it closely resembled the usual affection of the throat in scarlatina. Both classes were attended by cough and difficult breathing, by a strong tendency to congestion of the lungs, and during the first two or three days to coma. Since the first two weeks, the enlargement and ulceration of the tonsils, and the eruption of the skin, have been rare. The erythematous affection of the fauces, with the partial eruption of the skin, continued two or three weeks longer. During the last four weeks, the affection of the throat has occurred but seldom.

During the first four weeks, many children from three to seven years old were attacked. During the last, a large proportion of the patients have been under one year, and have presented the ordinary symptoms of lung fever, attended by no peculiarity, unless a tendency to congestion of the lungs, in an unusual number of cases, may be considered as such.

The disease has run its course rapidly, and generally terminated in from five to seven days. Some cases have terminated fatally in three days. In several cases the cough has continued some days, and, in a few, some weeks after the subsidence of the other symptoms, and the return of the appetite.

There are still occasional cases of the affection; but it appears to exist no longer among us as an epidemic. In most epidemics, the cases occurring near their close are of milder character than those which occur at their onset: but several of the last cases which have occurred in this, have been quite severe. The difficulty of breathing, in several cases of very young patients, has been peculiarly distressing, quite as much so as in the first cases that occurred.

In most instances the disease has readily yielded to the action of medicine. Out of forty cases that have come under my treatment, two have terminated fatally. In one of these the affection of the tonsils was strongly marked. In the other the affection of the throat was slight, but after a partial recovery, fits occurred, apparently from an error in diet, and congestion of the lungs followed. I am not aware of any peculiarity in the treatment which I have adopted, or that I can suggest anything important under this head. I will simply say that perseverance has overcome the disease, in several cases, where the prospect of recovery was exceedingly small. I have never been more impressed with the propriety of "hoping against hope," than I have in some cases in which the parents and friends have gathered around the little sufferers, in the momentary expectation of seeing them expire.

The circumstance that has struck me as peculiar in this epidemic, is the combination of the symptoms of scarlatina with those of pneumonia, and the gradual merging of the former in those of the latter.

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BOSTON MEDICAL AND SURGICAL JOURNAL.

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BOSTON, JULY 5, 1837.

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MERCURIAL PRACTICE OF MEDICINE.

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AN anonymous writer in the Plymouth Memorial has addressed two candid argumentative letters to us, on the subject of the propriety of prescribing mercury in nearly all diseases. As the series is to be continued we beg to express our regret that the author did not send his communications, with his name, directly to the Med. Journal, in which he would have been courteously treated, and a much greater number of medical men could have participated in the disquisition, than in a newspaper, which of course cannot command so many professional readers. At the onset, we wish the writer here alluded to, to understand, which he does not now seem to do, that neither we nor our correspondents are wedded so closely to mercurials as to be blind to the efficacy of other remedies. Indeed, he does not keep pace with the age, if he supposes that the physicians of New England, or, in fact, of the United States generally, resort to mercury as the Samson of the materia medica. A race of men are now on the stage, who are influenced by a more rational philosophy than guided the generations which have passed away. If the practice of physic has ever been too complicated or too arbitrary, it is now simple and scientific. But it were useless to enter into a discussion with one enveloped in darkness, and we therefore feel that there is no necessity of replying in detail to questions emanating from no tangible point.

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*American Medical Library.*—DUNGLISON'S AMERICAN MEDICAL LIBRARY, of which six numbers have been sent us by the publisher, fully sustains in its contents the reputation of its distinguished and able editor, as the mechanical execution does of Waldie, its publisher and printer, which presents a striking and refreshing contrast to the slovenly style of some of the works for the use of the profession, and we are glad to hear Mr. Waldie is well sustained in his undertaking. The present number contains twenty-four pages of unusually interesting medical intelligence, foreign and domestic, among which is an excellent analysis of the Transactions of the Medical Society for Observation in Paris, by Dr. Bowditch; the remainder of Stokes's Lectures, and the commencement of Hamilton's Practical Observations on Midwifery. Weeks, Jordan & Co., at the Literary Rooms, Washington street, are the publishers for New England.

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*Artemisia Absinthium in Epilepsy.*—Mr. Whitmore stated to the members of the London Medical Society that he had, for many years, been in the habit of using the *artemisia absinthium* in nervous affections. He had found it particularly beneficial in cases of epilepsy, some of the most obstinate cases of that affection having yielded to its employment. He is in the habit of giving the powder, in drachm doses, two or three

times a-day, and he has only known it fail in one or two instances. The patients did not complain of the bitterness of the medicine; he had never found it objected to on that head. He strongly recommended the members to give it a trial, and to commence with smaller quantities if the doses were considered too large. He gave it mixed with cold water. He had also found it extremely serviceable in hysteria, severe neuralgia, and chorea.

*Pericarditis.*—Dr. Johnson, of London, says that pericarditis may exist, to a great extent, without any suspicion of its presence being excited. He had lately been at the post-mortem examination of a young lady, who had been ill for five weeks, and died of this affection. Two physicians, one of them considered a good auscultator, had attended this patient, and the presence of pericarditis was not suspected. There were no febrile symptoms, the pulse for a considerable time was scarcely perceptible, the most prominent symptoms being great debility, dyspnoea on ascending the stairs, and troublesome cough. The lungs were supposed to be at fault. On examination after death, the lungs were found perfectly healthy. The pericardium contained five pints of serous fluid, and its internal surface displayed, over a great extent, a very fine reticulated structure, formed of adventitious membrane. This case was one showing the fallacy of all diagnostic marks in some instances. Regarding the treatment of pericarditis, in addition to calomel and opium, depletion to faintness in the standing position, and purgatives, would be proper; as the disease was frequently the sequence of rheumatism, colchicum and tartarized antimony might be beneficially employed, the one producing a specific effect, the antimony arresting the whole powers of life, particularly that of the heart, and thus saving the necessity of carrying blood-letting to an undue extent.

*Vaccination at the Hospital of Children, St. Petersburg.*—All the children were vaccinated at about the 14th day after birth. More than 4,000 infants belonging to the establishment, and 2,000 externes, were vaccinated. The method pursued is as follows:—All the children were vaccinated in both arms, by different physicians, and with different vaccine matter. The lancet-point, charged with matter, was introduced under the epidermis, from above downwards, and moved about in the small wound, so as to bring the vaccine in perfect contact with the surface. Six of these incisions were made on each arm, partly with the object of introducing a greater quantity of matter, and partly with that of rendering the operation more certain; this latter was probably obtained, for on an average not more than eight, out of one hundred cases, failed.

The vaccine pustules varied much in size, form, &c., according to the individual. In maturely born and healthy children, they commonly presented the aspect described by Jenner, and run the same course. Hence cannot be admitted, with Rust, and several other writers, the idea of the vaccine matter having degenerated, especially since that employed has never been renewed since Jenner's time; yet its power seemed as perfect as when first introduced. The propriety of vaccination, after a lapse of ten to fifteen years, seems to be better demonstrated; for, in the children, upon whom re-vaccination was practised, true vaccine pustules manifested themselves in three out of one hundred cases.—*London Lancet.*



*Illustration for a parent.*—Mr. Nicol, bookseller to the king, had lost five children, and his wife was in the family-way for the sixth. The late John Hunter, in passing one day, dropped in, and asked Mr. Nicol if he intended to kill this, as he had killed all the rest of his children. Mr. N., who was a North-countryman, had, on false principles, endeavored to inure his children to cold and rough usage, thinking that if they could not survive this they would never live to be reared to manhood. Not understanding such a question, therefore, he demanded of Hunter what he meant. "Why," said Hunter, "do you know what is the temperature of a hen with her callow brood? because if you don't, I'll tell you." He then proceeded to explain the necessity of warmth to young animals, and convinced Mr. Nicol of the propriety of changing his plan, which he did, and with complete success.—*Life of Hunter.*

*Death from Universal Pressure.*—At the Gallery of Practical Science in the Strand, is an hydrostatic press, which will produce a pressure of more than 30,000 lbs. on the square inch. Into this machine a live eel was lately introduced, and, tenacious of life as is that animal, which will survive for hours after it has been skinned and decapitated, the pressure of the water by the machine during a quarter of a minute effectually destroyed its life. Immediately afterwards every means was tried, with an energetic galvanic apparatus, to restore life in the animal, but in vain. It was perfectly insensible and rigid, not moving a muscle in the slightest degree. This experiment further demonstrates the compressibility of water, and was tried in order to test a continually-repeated assertion, that a living fish will not suffer the least inconvenience in a hydrostatic press.—*London Lancet.*

*Medical Miscellany.*—The camomile quack, Evans, begins to rival the prince of pill-makers, Brandeth, in everything but getting off his nostrums.—It has been recently confirmed that cold water dashed from the mouth of a well, on a person prostrated by noxious gases at the bottom, speedily resuscitates him.—At the village of Oos, in Germany, the thigh bones, vertebræ, and a tusk, of a mammoth, have been discovered forty feet below the surface. The tusk was seven feet long, white and enamelled: its circumference at the base, was nineteen inches.—Out of a cargo of 250 persons sent to New South Wales, who were allowed no stimulants, there was not a death during the voyage. In another ship, in which rum was allowed by rations, twenty per cent died before reaching Sidney.—Dr. T. Barlow, and Rufus Dawes, Esq. formerly of Boston, and Mr. L. M. Fowler, a practical phrenologist, have opened a suit of rooms in Broadway, New York, for the cultivation of phrenological pursuits, on a large scale. One takes care of the crania, Mr. Dawes is to publish a journal, and the third gentleman is to manipulate heads.—In July last, the Correctional Tribunal of the Seine condemned Sieur Girandeau to six days imprisonment and a fine of three hundred francs, for having announced secret remedies for the cure of syphilitic complaints.—A gargle of alum is represented to be an excellent remedy for fætor oris.—Much is said, and more quoted, of late, from *Neunham* on the disorders of literary men. Has the work ever been on sale in Boston?—Dr. Alexander H. Stevens, professor of the principles and practice of surgery in the New York College of Surgeons and Physicians, has resigned his chair.—The plague is spreading in Bulgaria.

**Rhode Island Medical Society.**—This Society held its annual meeting at the Redwood Library in Newport, on Wednesday, June 28th. The *Fiske Fund Trustees* announced the award of two premiums of forty dollars for the best dissertations on questions by them proposed to the members for the year 1836-7; viz. The one to Dr. David King, of Newport, for his dissertation on *Cholera Infantum*, and the other to Dr. Jacob Fuller, of Providence, for his dissertation on *Delirium Tremens*.

The names of gentlemen, elected officers for the ensuing year, will be given in the next Journal.

**TO CORRESPONDENTS.**—Dr. Mansur's case of dry gangrene will be inserted in the Journal soon.—Other papers, before acknowledged, will in a short time be published.

**DIED.**—At Philadelphia, Frederick Augustus Mulenberg, M.D., 36.

Whole number of deaths in Boston, for the week ending July 1, 25. Males, 11—Females, 14.  
Consumption, 3—old age, 2—pericarditis, 1—inflam. of the bowels, 1—smallpox, 1—drowned, 3—infantile, 1—typhus fever, 1—pneumonitis, 1—child-bed fever, 1—abscess of the brain, 1—fits, 1—marasmus, 1—apoplexy. 1—stillborn, 3.

#### NEW MEDICAL BOOKS.

**WILLIAM D. TICKNOR**, *Medical Bookseller*, corner of Washington and School streets, has just received, *Surgical Observations on Tumors, with Cases and Operations*; illustrated with many colored engravings. By John C. Warren, M.D. Price \$4.50.

*A Treatise on the Malformations, Injuries and Diseases of the Rectum and Anus*; illustrated with plates. By George Bushe, M.D. Price \$3.25.

Also as above, may be found, a very complete assortment of Medical Books, which will be sold on the most reasonable terms.

June 14.

#### RETREAT FOR INVALIDS AND INSANE IN PEPPERELL.

DR. N. CUTTER respectfully informs his friends and the public, that having completed the very extensive and important improvements to his establishment which he has for some time contemplated, he is now prepared to receive an additional number of patients. Another large and commodious building has just been erected, more particularly for the occupation of invalids, his pleasure-grounds have been improved, and such arrangements made as to secure his personal attention exclusively to the medical treatment of his patients. Able and experienced nurses will be in constant attendance, and every exertion made to render the establishment agreeable and useful to those who may be under its care.

31—June 21

Pepperell, Mass., June 1, 1837.

#### TO MEDICAL STUDENTS.

H. A. DEWAR, M.D. intends forming a class for the study of Dentistry, in every branch. The number will be limited, and each student will have an opportunity of becoming practically acquainted with all the operations and manipulations requisite. Dr. D. has provided a large and commodious work-room for their exclusive use. Further particulars may be learned by calling on Dr. Dewar, No. 1 Montgomery Place.

11—Oct. 19

Boston, Oct. 7, 1833.

**NEW ENGLAND JOURNAL OF MEDICINE AND SURGERY**, and the collateral branches of Science, conducted by a number of Physicians—from 1812 to 1827, 16 vols. half bound. This valuable work is now nearly out of print. One set for sale, at a low price, if applied for soon, to

W. D. TICKNOR.

June 21.

*Medical Bookseller, corner of Washington and School Sts.*

#### THEODORE METCALF—APOTHECARY.

NO. 33 Tremont street, ten doors north of the Tremont House, devotes his chief attention to compounding prescriptions; and assures physicians that, in his establishment, no persons will be entrusted with this duty, except those of skill and experience, and no articles used but those of the best quality.

T. M. keeps no *quack medicines*, but chooses to rely for support upon regular practitioners and their patients. He is permitted to refer to Drs. Jackson and Reynolds.

May 24.

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**THE BOSTON MEDICAL AND SURGICAL JOURNAL** is published every Wednesday, by D. CLAPP, JR. at 184 Washington Street, corner of Franklin Street, to whom all communications must be addressed, *post-paid*. It is also published in Monthly Parts, each Part containing the weekly numbers of the preceding month, stitched in a cover. J. V. C. SMITH, M.D. Editor.—Price \$3.00 a year in advance. \$3.50 after three months, and \$4.00 if not paid within the year.—Agents allowed every seventh copy *gratis*.—Orders from a distance must be accompanied by payment in advance, or satisfactory reference.—Postage the same as for a newspaper.